AN APOLOGIE FOR PRESBYTERIE, FOR REMOVING PREJUDICES.

By a Well-wisher to a true Gospel Ministry.

Ezra 7. 23. *Whatsoever is commanded by the God of Heaven, let it be diligently done for the House of the God of* Heaven, &c.

Mat. 10. 25. *It is enough for the Disciple that he be as his Master, and the Servant as his Lord*, &c.

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AN

APOLOGIE

FOR,

PRESBYTERIE.

THat our Parliament, after all the Acts, Edicts, Proclamations and Prosecutions we have seen, in behalf of *Prelacy* in this Church, now by the space of Twenty nine Years, hath at length by their Vote abolished it, and that this Plant which our Heavenly Father never planted, and hath been indeed to this poor Land, a Root bearing Gall and Wormwood, is by their hand rooted up; Is certainly the *Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes.* And with all a sure Ground of good Hope, that he who hath begun so good a work, will also perfect it, by the compleat Establishment, of the true Government of his House amongst us. But because it may be feared, that after so long a desuetude of *Presbyterie*, and after so many excesses, and abuses as we have seen and felt in *Prelacy*, enough to raise jealousie of the rule and power of all Church men; Men's minds may be ill affected, and many may need to be more perfectly instructed in the way of God, and thereby delivered from the prejudices that ill men are ready to suggest, and corrupt nature too apt to entertain against it. If I durst reckon any thing upon my self as a Well wisher to so good a Work, I humbly conceive, that nothing can contribute more to it, than the cool and quiet Consideration of what is obvious to every one that reads the New Testament,

of the rise and establishment of the Church, in its primitive simplicity and Purity.

And that our Lord, who came from Heaven, to purchase, redeem, cleanse and sanctify his Church, that he may present to himself a glorious Church, did for this end, and by vertue of the *All power* given Him in Heaven and Earth, send forth and appoint in it, in the Persons of his Apostles, a perpetual Ministry, to Disciple all Nations, by Baptizing and Teaching them whatsoever he commanded.

That this Discipling and Teaching with the Sacraments and Censures that they include, were its All and Only Work.

That the manner and end of this Work, on the part of the persons therewith intrusted, was purely Ministerial, in all Lowliness, Love, and Meekness, for Conversation and Edification; and expresly distinguished from that Grandure, Authority, and Constraint that visibly attends all secular Governments.

And, lastly, that the only allowance given to it was a right to, and promise of a necessary and just competency, with a very expres Discharge of caring for, or almost having any more.

These things, I say, (and all confirmed by our Lords own most blessed Practise and Example,) are so obvious and evident from the History of the Gospel, that whoever impartially reflects upon them, must be convinced, that indeed nothing less than a Mistery, and an unaccountable depth of iniquity, could possibly deprive, so holy, so plain and so innocent an Institution, to all that Luxe, worldly Pomp, Domination and Tyranny, that we have seen since, bottom'd upon it.

Nor is the second step of the Lord's Work, about the settling of his Churches, less instructive, seing that therein, (as may be seen in the *Acts* and *Epistles* of the *Apostles*,) we may clearly observe, that after (through God's Blessing upon their Labours) they had in any place gained and gathered a just Congregation, they immediatly ordain in it, with its own free choise and consent, a Company of Elders, Bishops, or Overseers, (all one in Scripture acceptation, both as to Name and Thing) in an exact parity, to oversee, feed, guide, and conduct them according to their respective Acts, and Offices, by the Lord's Word, Sacraments and Censures, in the Paths of Holiness unto Eternal Life.

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And thus Commending them to the Grace of God, they expreſly Declare, that they had kept back nothing that was profitable, but ſhewed unto them all the Counſel of God, and ſo leave them as Churches compleat, as to both Ordinances and Officers, with no other reſerve of Superiority to themſelves, than of that extraordinary and neceſſary one, of their being their firſt Teachers and Miniſters, as the immediate Apoſtles of Jeſus, without the leaſt veſtige, or inſinuation of any other ſuperior Office-bearer, either appointed or wanting amongſt them: which as it clearly excludes the neceſſity of *Prelacy* from any Church, that owns theſe Primitive Churches, inſtitute by the Apoſtles, to be good and ſufficient Patterns; ſo neither need we go any further, to find out that ſubordination of Courts and Aſſemblies owned by us, as neceſſary in the *Presbyterian* conſtitution, In as much, as it is certain that all the Churches of Chriſt, are not only moſt ſimilar, but really ſo united, or rather One among themſelves, by reaſon of that one Lord, one Spirit, one Hope, one Faith, and one Baptiſm, which clearly render them one Body, that were it not for the extraneous and accidental Impediments of time and place, and other Conditions, that attend this our frail and mortal State, Chriſt's Church on Earth, ſhould in effect be but one Aſſembly, and no leſs one, than that in Heaven.

From which ground it neceſſarly follows, that ſeing all the true Churches of Chriſt are rather accidentally ſeparate, than really diſtinguiſhed, they are in truth but one body, which as naturally imports the ſubordination of Particular Churches, to their ſuperior aſſociations, as all the parts and members of the Body are, & ought to be Subject to the whole, or as the ſingle Congregations, for example in the great Church of *Antioch*, were lyable to the direction of its intire conſiſtory. And in effect the unity of Chriſts Church on Earth, and his promiſed preſence in it, even from its moſt general aſſembly to *If it were but two or three meet together in his name*, are ſo ſure and cleare a foundation for the power of the whole over its parts, and the ſubordination of the leſſer to the greater, wherein it is included, that we ſee that in all times and places, and under all forms, it hath been conſtantly acknowledged. I urge not the firſt aſſembly at Jeruſalem, may be it was but a reference,

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nor do I uſe any argument from *Paul's* concluding of the queſtion about long Hair, with the general cuſtom and ſenſe of the Churches of God, but the thing is plain and obvious in common ſenſe, that the union of every body whether Eccleſiaſtick or Politick, imports the ſubordination of its parts to the whole. So that I muſt again ſay, that whoſo reflects upon that primitive power and ſimple eſtate of Chriſts Church, will not only find that particular Churches, whether greater or ſmaller, were in themſelves compleat, having all the ordinances of Jeſus, under the rule of their *Elders*, *Overſeers*, or *Biſhops* in an equal parity and joint Government, without any Superiority: But muſt alſo acknowledge, that the unity of Chriſts Church in general, by them ſo expreſly acknowledged, did unavoidably inferr the due Subordination and ſubmiſſion, of theſe particular Churches, to any broader aſſociation whereof they came to be parts. And conſidering the beautiful order, and happy effects of this form, with the ſad conſequences that enſued upon the change, it had no doubt been happy for all the Churches that it had ever continued.

But it not being my purpoſe to digreſs into the notice of the firſt (perhaps innocent but quickly abuſed) alterations, whereby from leſs to more, under the pretext of keeping order and unity, and alſo of adjuſting the conſtitution of the Church, to an agreeable conformity to that of the State, this primitive, ſimple and humble order was firſt advanced to an *Hierarchy*, & afterwards exalted to a moſt Antichriſtian *Tyranny*, with the perpetual gradual ruine of truth and piety, I ſhall only tell you, that it was at this firſt & truly Apoſtolick appointment, that our Reformers from Popery, ſincerly aimed, and which after much wreſtling, they at length obtained to be fully ſettled, and alſo civilly confirmed under the name of *Preſbitery*, and *Presbiterian* Government about the year 1592. And to this ſame happy period it is hoped, that the late vote of Parliament, hath again reduced us. *Et ſi parva licet componere magnis*, and paſſing extrinſick abatements, I am inclinable to think that whoſo truly compares the purer primitive times of *Preſbitery*, with their after declinings unto *Prelacy* and all the ſuperſtition, Ignorance, impoſing, and Tyranny (Eſpecially after the ceaſing of Pagan perſecution) that ſo viſibly enſued upon

upon it, with our first times under the like Church frame (for with other Churches I meddle not) and our after back sliding from it, and the Irreligion, Prophanity, and Violence, that thereon followed, may find a very satisfying parallel.

But because albeit these things be plain and palpable, yet it is but too true, that mixtures of corruptions have concurred, partly on the one hand, to occasion, but more abundantly on the other, to create and raise prejudices against this *Presbyterian* Government, which may now be again stirred to hinder its Re-establishment, I shall proceed to notice such of them as are commonly objected.

And first it hath been, and is said, That *Presbiterian Ministers* under the pretence of their power and commission from Christ, withdraw and exempt themselves from the Kings Jurisdiction as to any thing (tho' otherwayes Treasonable or Seditious) spoke or done by them, directly in the exercise and discharge of their trust. Thus when mett in their assemblies without and against the Magistrates order, They have refused to dissolve at his command, affirming that they had their power and warrand by our Lords immediat Concession, as also when conveened before the Kings Council, for Treasonable or Seditious words uttered in their Sermons, they have declined to answer, till their words or Doctrine, as they terme it, should be first tried by the Church, *whether agreeable or not to the word of God*, alledging that at least in the *first Instance* they are only thereto accountable.

But tho' this objection hath been much blown about, to discredit *Presbitry*, as *Imperium in Imperio*, incompatible with civil Government, as likewise that all questions touching the Conflict of Jurisdictions, specially if they be Soveraign, are ever found to be very aukward and intricate; Yet I must say in the first place, that for all the noise this objection hath made, Instances of this kind, and these of a far higher nature, may far more easily be found in the Prelatick, than in the *Presbiterian* constitution. And if the accidental Court favour of Prelacy, and disgrace of *Presbitery*, may in these later times have given the former any advantage, no thanks to its good nature (since it served neither God nor the King for nought) more then to that of *Presbitery*, which manifestly in

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times of temptation (the only times of tryal) hath ever witneſſed the greater patience and Subjection;

And next to come to the point more cloſly, upon a ſmall examination, it will appear, that there is nothing truely in this matter, that is not common, and conſequent to the principles of all perſwaſions, In as much as it is certain, that the Church doth not at all pretend to any Jurisdiction of the ſame *kind* with that of the Civil Magiſtrate: So that in effect there neither is, nor can be here any contrariety, to impede the Magiſtrates power, in its juſt and final Iſſues: For if the Church on any occaſion, happen to aſſert her Right, and decline a contrary Command, if ſhe humbly diſobey, and give her Teſtimony (as we have ſeen the beſt Prelatick Churches do with great commendation) there is an end. Whereas if the Magiſtrate remain unſatisfyed, he may ſtill go on to execute his own Laws and Edicts, without any farther demur.

Nor is there any more of *imperium in imperio*, in this caſe, than in any other, where it comes to be queſtioned, *whether it be right in the ſight of God, to hearken unto Man, more than God?* For there of neceſſity God's Impire and Command, comes to be oppoſed and preferred to Man's. And yet without the leaſt impeaching of any Right and Power, that the higheſt of Men may lawfully acclaim. Suppoſing then that the Church hath Right and Warrand from our Lord, to meet in Aſſemblies, as well for Government as for Divine Worſhip (as we may ſee clearly that it has, and that without this warrand, it is impoſſible that either of theſe Ordinances can be explicat) is it not evident that it is by the ſame Principle, that directs and impowers *Prelatiſts* to claim their right, and complain of wrong, when prohibit to meet together for Worſhip, that *Presbyterians* do the like (and more they pretend not to) when hindred to Conveen for *Government*? And that in this matter there can be no difference, unleſs we ſhall think that the former are either indifferent, as to all Meetings, which they themſelves do honeſtly diſclaim as impious, or that they make a diſtinction betwixt *Meetings for Worſhip, and Meetings for Diſcipline and Government*, which yet in Ordinances equally appointed, as theſe are, can no ways be admitted.

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By all which, it is evident, that when in former times (which yet I think hapned but once in more then these Hundred Years, and that in a very Critical Juncture) Ministers mett in their assemblies for *Government*, declined to dissolve at the Magistrates command, Humbly asserting their own right, without any farther opposition; They in effect did no more, and from no other Principle, than what all Prelatists allow, in case themselves were prohibit to meet together for *worship*, *viz*, That seeing *it is better to obey God than Man*, they could not agree to it, But must assert their right without any prejudice, to the Magistrates just Authority, or farther opposition, to its full Execution. So that the whole of this debate doth evidently resolve in this precise point, *Whether Ministers have not the same warrand from their Master, to meet for discipline, as to meet for Worship*? Which with submission, I must profess, I could never see Reason to distinguish.

And as to the Charge of Declining the Magistrates cognition in the *first Instance*, in the matter of *Doctrine*, Whatever ill appearance it may have at the first view, it meerly proceeds from an Unluckie Supposition, as if the Church and its Ministers who ought to be the teachers and examples of all Loyaltie, were yet not really such in their perswasion and practice. And thence it visibly flowes, that if any of their number happen to transgress, by lashing a few words in their Sermons, that prove offensive, The whole Church Judicatures notwithstanding, that all presumptions do make for them, come presently to be suspected as Judges incompetent; Whereas if we would do them the same equal Justice that we Crave to our selves, and allow them not only the Charity of being good Subjects, but a right to their own Courts Authorized by both King and Parliament, we would easily grant that all that they have at any time contended for in this question, is purely the benefite of the good Order established by his *Majesties* Laws, without any prejudice of his Royal *Power and Prerogative*, which is here, as in several other cases, in the second Instance intirely reserved.

It's known that the *House of Commons* in *England* have the Priviledge, which they also maintain tenaciously, that for any thing whatsoever

ſoever ſpoke by any Member in the Houſe, ſuppoſe it may be Seditious or Treaſonable, yet can that Member only be call'd in queſtion for it by the Houſe it ſelf; and farther, if here acquite and abſolved, neither King nor Lords, may ſo much as inquire any more into it. If then, this Civil Court meerly of Mans Making, have ſo high and incontrollable a Liberty, ſhould we in a Chriſtian Kingdom, acknowledging Chriſts Miniſters to be ſuch, grudge them the Juſtice pleaded for, ſpecially ſince it ſtill reſerves the Magiſtrates Soveraign Power, as Paramount to it, as hath been above declared.

And that this Priviledge contended for by the Church, is indeed founded upon his Majeſties Laws, and that, as being a Chriſtian Magiſtrate, and not preciſely arrogat (as ſome untruly alledge) on a pretended *Divine* Prerogative, appears clearly by this, That neither did Primitive Chriſtians of old, nor *Presbyterians* of late, at all think this declinator proper, to be made to a Pagan Magiſtrate, when by him queſtioned for their Doctrine in the moſt Spiritual Points, as truely and rightly ſuppoſing the *Pagan* Magiſtrate to own no ſuch Law or Rule, But only the *Chriſtian*: Nor doth Chriſtianity therefore diminiſh the Magiſtrates juſt Power, any more than a man's omitting to propone before an uſurping Tyrant, trampling upon all Law, ſuch Legal Defences as he might and would make, before a Lawful Magiſtrate, Do h derogate from the Magiſtrates, juſt Right, which in effect it rather eſtabliſheth.

It's true it may be ſaid, that if the Magiſtrats Cognition be admitted in the ſecond inſtance, the Point appears to be rather a Point of *Policy*, than of *real incompetency*: And indeed if here we underſtand nothing worſe by *Policy*, than the good Order above mentioned, eſtabliſhed by Law in the civil Sanction of the Churches Rights, I ſee not how this can be condemned, ſince plainly the Plea amounts to no more, than that true and Faithful Miniſters, never very acceptable to a licentious and profane World, ſhould not be expoſed to be haled from their Churches and Charges, upon accuſations that may be lightly or maliciouſly proter'd againſt them, by any perſon to whom their Doctrine proves uneaſy. But that ſeeing our Lord has eſtabliſhed, and the King and Parliament has con-

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firmed Church Judicatures, for the overſight and cenſure of all Miniſters, Tranſgreſſing in any ſort, in the diſcharge of their office, all ſuch accuſations ſhould be there firſt tabl'd and tryed, where either it may have a juſt iſſue, or in caſe of wrong Judgement paſs to the Magiſtrates Superior tryal. Which no *Presbyterian* did ever in that event Controvert.

And thus you may ſee, that the ſum of this exemption, that *Preſbiterian Miniſters* are charged to arrogat, reſolves intirely in this, that ſeing it cannot be denied, that Chriſt hath inſtitute their Office, appointed them their Rule, and ordained their fellow Prophets to be their Judges, and that theſe things are confirmed by the Laws of the Land, ſpecially by the Act. 114. *Ja. 6. par*; 12. with an expreſs declaration that the Act. 129 *Ja*; 6 *par:* 8. confirming the Kings Royal power, over all Eſtates and Perſons *ſhall noways derogat to the priviledge God hath Given to the Spiritual Officebearers in the Kirk, Concerning heads of Religion* &c: *And their eſſential Cenſures*, Men ſhould therefore lay aſide all prevention, and fairly Judging that Miniſters according to their known duty, will no leſs beware of points of Treaſon or Sedition, than of points of Hereſy or Schiſme; leave them and their Doctrine to be firſt tryed and cenſured by their own Courts, after the order eſtabliſhed, without the leaſt prejudice to the Kings Soveraign Power, to reviſe and correct their Judgment in caſe of error, *In the ſecond Inſtance*, which as I humbly conceive ſhould break no ſquares.

And yet when I conſider on the other part, that this at beſt is but a point of Priviledge, which albeit ſometimes moſt juſtly and zealouſly contended for as ſuch, by Faithful men, is nevertheleſs as to its uſe and exerciſe, free, and ought always to cede to the great end of the Churches edification. I cannot but be very tender of condemning any, who even when clearly queſtioned for ſound Doctrine, may be moved to forbear it. And my reaſon is, that albeit I allow it to be a priviledge as to its *Right*, yet as to its *Uſe* we are under no poſitive precept. So that if an honeſt Miniſter Judging truth to be its own firmeſt warrand, and its free confeſſion its beſt and moſt recommended defence, ſhall when queſtioned on any pretext before the Magi-

ſtrate, for his preaching, readily and meekly own it, as ſpoke in Gods Name, from his Word, without once offering to decline; I ſee not why he ſhould be reprehended, ſpecially when he may be thereto induced, by the examples both of our Lord and his Apoſtles, as alſo that of *Jeremiah*, whoſe Apology before the princes, *viz. That the Lord had ſent him to ſay all that he had ſaid, and therefore they ought to obey; but as for himſelf, he was in their Hands, only they might be aſſured, that if they put him to death, they ſhould be guilty of innocent Blood, ſeeing that of a truth the Lord had ſent him*, ſeems to be an exact and excellent Pattern.

The ſecond Objection made againſt Presbyterian Miniſters, is, That they tranſgreſs in medling beyond their Line with *State-Affairs*, to the diſturbance both of the Government and publick Peace. But here it were to be deſired, that the Objectors, in the firſt place, would clearly red Marches: And next, it is very certain, that whatever may be juſtly Objected on this Head, is neither peculiar to Presbytery, nor more chargeable on Presbyterian Preachers, than on thoſe of other Perſwaſions. But becauſe there is, no doubt, a Meaſure in this Matter, (tho' its preciſe Boundings cannot be ſo diſtinctly fixed) And that neither Truth nor Ingenuity allow me to affirm, That our Miniſters (Men ſubject to like paſſions with others) have at no time tranſgreſſed; I muſt in anſwer ſay, That to offer to judge the Principles and Spirit of a whole Party in all times, from what hath been found to be the Temper and Practice of ſome few of that Way, at certain times, ſpecially times of temptation, is no ways juſt nor equal. And whether the times wherein our Miniſters have been found guilty of theſe Exceſſes, were not times of temptation, by reaſon either of ſome extraordinary prevailing Contention, or the unhappy Involution of our Church in State-Engagements; And whether at other times when theſe temptations ceaſed, as during the Engliſh Uſurpation, and in all the Years of the late Suppreſſion, that ſucceeded, they were not again as abſtract and free of all Medlings. And laſtly, whether the ſame Viciſſitudes have not been obſervable in Prelatiſts, according to the Changes wherewith they have been exerciſed; Theſe things, I ſay, I leave to the Impartial Reflection of every Mans Memory.

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However, upon the matter I am ſure, that all Presbyterians do heartily agree, That the example of our Lord and his Apoſtles in their Preachings, for the Worlds Converſion and Reformation, and which were indeed as far from State-Medlings, as our Lord himſelf was from civil judging; is their beſt pattern. And really ſince our Lords uncontroverted Power, Intereſt and Acceſs to have interpoſed this way in publick Matters, doth render his forbearance ſo much the more obſervable; and that it is unqueſtionable, that the preaching of Faith and Repentance (as ſome do lightly, but all Men may ſeriouſly, term it) is alone ſufficient, *to make the Man of God perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all good works*; As likewiſe that the reforming of Men, is the moſt effectual and beſt correction, of all publick, as well as private Abuſes; I cannot ſee why ſuch plain and evident Truths, ſhould not bring all parties to one and the ſame Underſtanding.

I might alſo here add, That our Miniſters preſent inoffenſive Deportment, after the long Tract of theſe various Diſpenſations, wherewith it hath pleaſed the Lord to exerciſe, and I hope, to poliſh them, for a more cloſe purſuance of his Work, may, I think, give all Men a ſatisfying Aſſurance in this Matter. But the truth is, that at this time, there appears ſo little ground for the Objection on the Miniſters part; and on the other part, this critical cenſuring, even when it may have ſome real cauſe, ſo naturally admits, and is ſo readily pouſſed on, by the Mixtures of Mens pride and impatience, that I rather fear I have ſaid too much.

The principal Work of Goſpel-Miniſters, is certainly to hold forth the Word of the Lord, and the Rules of Truth and Righteouſneſs therein contained, with all evidence and power: But the application, ſpecially in publick Affairs, requiring a more diffuſe and exact Knowledge of Matters of Fact, (whereof a great part are without the Preachers Line) and depending in all caſes chiefly upon the Hearers Conſcience, hid in his own Breaſt, and the Spirits peculiar Province, doth no leſs clearly require the greateſt Skill and Tenderneſs. And in my humble Opinion, conſidering the many Inconveniences, that commonly attend the leaſt exceſs of Liberty in State-Matters, The great end of Edification, doth in this caſe, rather perſwade to leave this Work of Application in publick, wholly to the Spirits management and influence upon the Hearers.

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And farther, if a Matter be once concluded, by a *Final Resolution*, and *Act* paſt upon it by the Civil Magiſtrate, which all good Subjects are obliged to Notice; its hardly ſuppoſeable in any Chriſtian State, not directly apoſtatizing from the Faith, that it can contain ſo groſs an Aberration, as to allow publick Declaiming againſt it; which is plainly the laſt of Remedies: So that any *State-Error* here calable, being for the moſt part ſuch as good Chriſtians may differ about, without any manifeſt hazard of their Salvation; I think it may be eaſily accorded, that it is much better in ſuch an occurrence, to commit Men to the Conviction of Gods Spirit, from the light of general *Precepts* declared from Scripture, as the method more promiſing, than to deſcend with the hazard of Charity and *Peace* to irritating, and for the moſt part unedifying Applications.

But yet, as in Old Times, we find that beſide the Teachers of the Law, who were of the *Prieſts* and Levites, and whoſe place and Seat our Preachers under the Goſpel do now poſſeſs; the Lord was pleaſed, upon Occaſions, to ſend forth prophets, with ſpecial Meſſages, not only for predictions, but alſo for extraordinary warnings; ſo it cannot be denied, but that he, who hath the *reſidue of the ſame ſpirit*, may at times, and according to his good pleaſure, ſtill ſtir up and prompt his Servants to the like particular Admonitions, which tho' always agreeable to the written Word, yet fall not under ordinary Rules, and are in effect beſt juſtified by a firm adherence, without any Declinator, after the example of the ſame ancient Prophets, whatever may be the iſſue.

And thus having ſhewed, that the Charge contained in this Objection, doth not affect Presbyterians more than others; and that however former Occaſions might have influenced them, yet their preſent frame and carriage is above exception. And having alſo adventured to ſet down my Thoughts in truth and ſoberneſs, concerning this moſt tender point of Doctrinal Applications, with a due reſerve of the unboundable Liberty of the Lords free Spirit, in ſuch a manner as I hope may be ſatisfying to every Soul, that truly fears the Lord, and trembles at his Word, I ſhall now cloſe my Diſcourſe on both the foregoing Objections, with this one Word of humble Advice, to thoſe who may yet remain unconvinced, and that is, That they would but coolly reflect upon theſe their prejudices,

prejudices, and what they truly import, which indeed at the bottom, is no better than this, That the Miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt, whom we our ſelves acknowledge to be ſent of him, to inſtruct and guide us in the way of Salvation, tho' they profeſs all Subjection to the Civil Government, yet muſt not preſume ſo far, as to do what not only all approven Societies, but all Men every where, either for common buſineſs, idleneſs, or worſe ends, do, *viz.* To meet together, even about their Maſters and our Souls Concerns, without leave expreſly asked and given, and as ſome would have it, a Cenſor ſet over them: And albeit refuſed this Liberty, yet muſt not ſo much as ſay, That their Maſter and they are wronged; That albeit we hold them to be Teachers ſent of God, to teach us all Vertue and Morality, and our Parliaments have confirmed to them, the Priviledges that Chriſt hath given them, yet muſt they not pretend to the benefit of this Order, to wit, to be firſt liable, for trial of their Doctrine delivered from Gods Word, in the Courts he hath appointed: But upon every Alledgance of offenſive Words dropt in their Sermons, muſt be charged to anſwer immediately before Civil Courts, without daring to proteſt for the aforeſaid benefit, albeit eſtabliſhed by the Laws both of God and Man. And laſtly, That though we be commanded, and do profeſs to hear them, with *good Minds*, and *humble Hearts*, as the Meſſengers of Chriſt, yet we cannot bear their Liberty of Speech, tho' all Men elſe both acclaim and uſe it; unleſs it be bounded by a Rule of our own making, and which no Man as yet hath adventured preciſely to define

This being the true Paraphraſe, of the above-mentioned Prejudices, what elſe can they argue, Than that in the Matters, and touching the Miniſters of God, evil Suſpitions preponderat the beſt Preſumptions; and Mens ſecret and unobſerved Corruption, prompts them to jealouſe ſuch, for words in things ſecular, to whom nevertheleſs they ſecurely commit the conduct of their Souls, in all Spirituals; and to impute the common failings of a few frail men in times of trial, to the Principles and Spirit of a whole Order, whom yet they do not deny to be of Chriſts own Inſtitution, and to aim ſincerely at his good pleaſure.

But how much more were it to be desired, that prejudices laid aside, all men would ser ously call to mind, that under the Sun there is nothing perfect: That the Lord himself hath committed the *Heavenly Treasure of his Word, even to earthen Vessels*: That these also amongst *Us* he hath of a long time been purging, fitting and preparing, by a Remarkable Tract of humbling experiences: That if formerly some through Temptation did exceed, there were also Faults on both sides: And lastly that all the Excesses that *Presbyterians* can be charged with, are but Mole-hills, compared to the Mountains of the late Clergies Disorders. Which things being gravely pondered, I am confident, that for times to come, it will easily appear to be the true and best Method, toward a happy Settlement, that both Ministers should *be wise, and the Judges of the Earth instructed, to serve the Lord with Fear, and rejoyce with Trembling*: *And that* therefore our *Rulers, kissing the Son*, and going forward in His Work, should in the first place, set up and restore *Presbytery*, Recommended to them by the will of God, as well as by His Peoples Inclination, forgetting bypast Offences, which may be well judged to be now sufficiently expiate, and leaving what may occur for the future, to an after more seasonable Correction.

The third Objection moved against *Presbytery*, Is the *severity of its Discipline*, and certainly Church Discipline is a concern more tender and delicate, than most men imagine, as being not more apt to be ruined by neglect, than frustrat and rendered ineffectual by an overstretched severity. But alas! if men would a little reflect, what was the manner and measure of Church Discipline, in the Ancient Primitive Times; they would soon be convinced, that its then strictness was indeed as far beyond all our *Presbyterian* Rigours, as their Holiness is beyond our Looseness: And that the true difference betwixt us and them, lyes mostly in this, That they had then to do with a humble People, willing to submit, and ordinarly undertaking more than was imposed; whereas Ministers now, have to do with a Generation, that have altogether *broken the Yoke, and burst the Bonds*: And the few that make any submission, are visibly of the meaner sort, who in formality comply, because they dare not do otherwise.

So

So that the Errour of *Presbytery* on this hand, appears to me not to be in the Degree, but plainly that about Ministers offer to apply their Discipline for Repentance and Absolution, to such as are neither capable nor worthy. And the Rule, *Give not that which is holy unto the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you*, is indeed both their Reproof and Warning.

I am therefore very free to acknowledge, that if this be all meant, by the Charge contained in this Objection; *Presbytery* hath exceeded: But to understand the thing more perfectly, I shall distinctly take notice of a few Particulars, which I hope may as to this Point be fully satisfying.

And *Discipline* beginning with the Notice, either given or taken of occurring Scandals, it is undoubtedly unbecoming that *Christian Charity*, whence all Church Censures should proceed, and that end of *Edification* where they ought to terminate, either to raise Scandals by a curious inquiry into things latent, or to heighten them, by misconstruction in matters Dubious. But where Offences come to be open and notour, plainly tending to the prejudice, as well of the rest of the Flock, as of the Offender; there, no question, Charity calls for Discipline to be applied, in so far as *Edification may be expected*, unless a *Pastor do visibly neglect his trust:* But, May, in so far as Edification may be expected, because albeit the Scandal were flagrant, yet if either the Quality of the Party, or any other Circumstance, do clearly intimate, that the using of Discipline, would sooner produce disorder, than the end of Edification; It is undoubtedly the Pastor and Churches Duty, in such a case, to forbear the fruitless exercise of this mean, and rather to content themselves with such others, as may be more probably us'ed, and above all, with addressing earnestly to the Lord himself, for remedy. To press and persue censure meerly for the Churches credit, is not a *Christian*, far less a *Presbyterian* Practice, and the Papal Fulminations against Kings and Princes, every where so odious, do so manifestly flow from this Fountain, that whoso remembers the meekness and lowliness of our Lord Jesus, and propeses the *Blessed Mind that was in Him*, for his Pattern, must perpetually disown it.

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Nor ought the Church to be leſs tender in its procedure, for removing ſcandals, after their plain diſcovery, by adhibiting in the firſt place the moſt loving and gentle ways of Admonition and Inſtruction, in order to the parties conviction, both in private and in the more publick Tryal, before expoſing and putting to ſhame by open rebuke; and then by a Charitable Relaxing as much as is poſſible, the ſtrictneſs of ordinary Forms, for the better gaining of the offender, which evidently is moſt conformable both to our Lords Precept and Pleaſure.

Citations, Lybels, diſcuſſing of the Relevancy, taking probation, adviſing of the cauſe, and giving Judgement; are all rational and fair ſteps in matter of judicature, for declaring and determining right or wrong: but where the ſingle end is to reclaim, and recover a poor Sinner, and prevent the ſtumbling of others, they muſt of neceſſity prove very aride and unfruitful Formalities, if not ma ageo and mollified by the tendereſt Charity: And if even in theſe particulars, the *humble Miniſtery* recommended by our Lord, be not diſtinguiſhed in this its exerciſe, from the *manner* of ſecular Authority, according to his expreſs appointment,

As likeways for the laſt ſtep, when the ſcandal comes to be clearly found, and its author manifeſtly redargued; queſtionleſs the moſt moving and pathetick exhortations to repentance, can never be enough uſed: And farther publick reproof, and putting to ſhame in caſe of obſtinacy, as alſo the keeping back from the Lords Table, and noting and diſcountenancing, or (even in its proper caſes) the cutting off of ſuch offenders, are in like manner, of our Lords appointment. But as for all capitulatings, enjoynings, or threatnings to repent, or to any circumſtance thereof, either by refuſing of extrinſick favours, or menacing (as with outlawery ſuch as come to be excommunicat) with all other indirect methods, let them be for ever laid aſide. Repentance is from the free grace of Gods Spirit, that *bloweth where it liſteth*: And tho' the Lord may Sanctifie things purely accidental, for convincing and bringing home a Sinner, yet the only means to us allowed for that end, are the word, and fair rebuke and cenſure; And whatever courſes we take beſides theſe,

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are plainly the devices of men, endeavouring by the procurement of a feigned ſubmiſſion to ſalve their *own honour*, with the coſt of *Gods Glory*, to whom all diſſemblers ſpecially in pretended repentances, are an abomination; Beſides that *Re-admiſſion* to Church-fellowſhip and priviledges, is a thing of more value, than to be proferr'd where not truely deſerved, and ſeriouſly ſued for. And all the Churches of Chriſt, and ours in particular, have ſo notourly transgreſſed, by Corrupting both the thing and name of *true publick Repentance*, toward God, unto the vain formality of a *God-mocking pennance*; that I cannot but again wiſh, that this woful evil may be thorowly amended, Mourning, Faſting, beating down of the Body, and other ſoul-afflicting mortifications, are no doubt of ſingular uſe and acceptance alſo, when flowing from a heart truly humbled for ſin in Gods ſight. But if any Bodily Pain of this ſort, muſt needs be impoſed and inflicted by others, for correction, let the Juſtices of peace, and other Magiſtrates in the fear of God ſee to it, but let not the name, ordinance and Church of Chriſt, be thereby profaned.

And I am confident that were this ordinance of Church Diſcipline, thus Charitably and holily exerciſed (as we may hope it ſhall be) and theſe thereby noted, not ſentenced as it were to repent, or rather to do *Pennance*, but after due admonition and Rebuke, in the Lords name and Authority, freely left to the *Grace of God* to repent indeed, and humbly to beg reconciliation and re admiſſion; then ſhould we ſoon ſee more of its *good Fruits*, and hear fewer complaints of its *Severity*.

To theſe objections above diſcuſſed, I know that others alſo may be added, Touching certain particular forms and methods of *Preſbitery*, but ſeeing they are not ſo much made a ground of theſe prejudices, that were here principally deſigned to be removed, and are fully elſwhere by others anſwered, I ſhall not farther inſiſt.

There remain yet two general conſiderations for *Preſbitery*, that I judge may and ſhould alone pre-ponderat, to all the exceptions that can be made againſt it. The one is, that I beleive it to be inconteſtable over all Scotland, that *Preſbiterian* Government in this Church is undoubtedly the Government, that hath been always found

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most conducible for the preservation of the Protestant Religion, and the advancement of true knowledge, Piety and godliness: Which being the principal, if not the sole ends of all Church Governments, do in all right and reason whether Divine or Humane, give *Presbitery* (at least as to this Kingdom) the most preferable and best Character. And the other, that besides the foresaid intrinsick and Spiritual recommendation, It hath also no less certainly this Politick advantage, as to the Nation; that it is absolutely necessary for its present composure and quiet, it being now after the long and sad experience of two attempts, of twice thirty years, to make this Church and Kingdom peaceably submit to prelacy, manifestly found, that unless *Presbiterian* Government be fairly and intirely resetled, after its old and wonted manner, it is morally impossible to restore and establish our peace.

But the truth and weight of these things being sufficiently apprehended and acknowledged by all I shall only for a Conclusion, put up this hearty wish, that it would please God to incline all mens hearts, more to the love and obedience of the Truth, and the serious study and practice of Holiness, and then I am sure, that *Presbitery*, one of the principal Means thereto tending, shall no longer be accounted a burdensome Yoke, but cordially imbraced by all, as a Heavenly Blessing.

FINIS.

The Reader is desired to correct these few escapes in some Copies.

[1] Pag. 2. Line 4. for present to, read present it to. *Ibid.* *l.* 13. for Conversation, r. Conversion. *Ibid.* *l.* 23. for deprive r. deprave. *Ibid.* *l.* 34. for Acts r. Gifts.